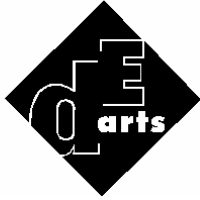


**Delaware Division
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December 2, 2005

News Release: For Immediate Release

DELAWARE DIVISION OF THE ARTS ANNOUNCES POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

***High school students throughout Delaware invited
to compete in national poetry recitation contest***

[Wilmington, DE] — The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*, in partnership with the Delaware Division of the Arts (DDOA). *Poetry Out Loud* is a program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. Starting in early 2006, schools in each state are invited to participate in classroom and school-wide contests, advancing to state competitions next April. State champions will advance to the National Finals, to take place on May 16, 2006, in Washington, DC.

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers by capitalizing on the latest trends in poetry - recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form, as seen in the slam poetry movement and the immense popularity of rap music among youth. *Poetry Out Loud* invites the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theater into the English class. Through *Poetry Out Loud*, students can master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage.

"Learning great poetry by heart develops the mind and imagination," said Dana Gioia, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. "It isn't just an arts program. By immersing themselves in powerful language and ideas, the students will develop their ability to speak well, especially in public. This is a skill they will use in the workplace and the community for the rest of their lives."

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"The public recitation of great poetry," said John Barr, President of the Poetry Foundation, "is a way to honor the speaker, the poem, and the audience all at once. Poetry Out Loud brings new energy to an ancient art by returning it to the classrooms of America."

"Poetry, by its very nature, lends itself to the spoken word. *Poetry Out Loud* not only reinforces an ancient tradition, but also supports contemporary trends in the public presentation of the printed word," says Paul Weagraff, deputy director of DDOA and state coordinator of *Poetry Out Loud*.

Delaware Division of the Arts to implement local programs, offer free curricular materials

The NEA and the Poetry Foundation have each contributed \$500,000 towards the 2006 *Poetry Out Loud* program in support of materials, grants, prizes and the National Finals next May. With this support, the DDOA will target at least 10 to 20 high schools throughout the state.

The Delaware Division of the Arts will provide support to bring theater artists, upon request, into participating schools to lead workshops on public speaking and presentation skills. Additionally, the NEA and the Poetry Foundation will provide the Delaware Division of the Arts with free, standards-based curriculum materials for use by participating schools.

These materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a program guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, and an audio CD featuring well-known actors and writers such as James Earl Jones, Anthony Hopkins, Alyssa Milano, and N. Scott Momaday. Program materials are available for download on the new website, www.poetryoutloud.org, which offers additional resources.

How to get involved in Poetry Out Loud

All public, private, parochial and charter high schools in Delaware will receive an invitation to participate during the first week of December. Materials are also available on the DDOA's website at www.artsdel.org/poetryoutloud. Schools are asked to complete the application and return it to the DDOA by December 20, 2005. High school teachers who are interested in participating in *Poetry Out Loud* should know that the program requires less than two or three weeks of class time.

Structured much like the National Spelling and Geography Bees, participating schools are expected to run their local programs and recitation contests between January and March. The DDOA will hold its final recitation contest on April 11, 2006 at the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts in Dover. The National Finals will take place on May 16, 2006, in Washington, DC. Interested participants can contact Paul Weagraff at the DDOA or visit www.poetryoutloud.org for more information.

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Poetry Out Loud Prizes

Students who participate in the official *Poetry Out Loud* program may be eligible to compete in the State and National Finals next April and May. Each winner at the state level will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, DC, to compete for the national championship. The state winner's school will receive a \$500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. One runner-up in each state will receive \$100, with \$200 for his or her school library. *Poetry Out Loud* will award a total of \$50,000 in scholarships and school stipends at the National Finals, with at least a \$20,000 college scholarship for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Champion.

About the Poetry Foundation

The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine, has embarked on an ambitious plan to bring the best poetry before the largest possible audience. In the coming year, the Foundation will launch a major new poetry website and sponsor an unprecedented study to understand poetry's place in American culture. Founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912, *Poetry* is the oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. Harriet Monroe's "Open Door" policy, set forth in Volume I of the magazine, remains the most succinct statement of *Poetry*'s mission: to print the best poetry written today, in whatever style, genre, or approach.

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts—both new and established—bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

About the Delaware Division of the Arts

The Delaware Division of the Arts (DDOA), a branch of the Delaware Department of State, is dedicated to promoting and developing the arts throughout the state. Together with its advisory body, the Delaware State Arts Council (DSAC), the Division administers grants and programs that support arts programming, educate the public, increase awareness of the arts, and integrate the arts into all facets of Delaware life.